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AUTHOR Marland, S. P., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

Career education has two goals: first, that every person shall leave secondary school able to get employment of interest, of importance, and--most important--with good potential for advancement in every sense; second, that those who choose will be able to go on to some form of postsecondary education, whether a community or junior college, a two-year technical institute, a four-year institution, or professional graduate studies. Career education will, for the first time, give young people a sense of control over their own destiny, give them a chance to shape their own lives in systematic ways, and give them sufficient solid information and experience to make it work. Occupational inequality is spread across the population: career education is needed for every American, whatever his or her color, native language, age or location. It is needed in particular for the 2.5 million young people who spill out of our high schools and colleges every year unskilled and unschooled, prepared only to disappear into our broadening, deepening pool of the unemployed, the underemployed, and the disillusioned. In a society such as ours, which prizes and rewards skill and competence above all else, there is simply no need--and no room--for the unskilled and the incompetent, whatever color they happen to be. A properly designed, well financed program of career education can turn this situation around. (Author/JM)

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CAREER EDUCATION AND THE MINORITIES*

By S. P. Marland Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

Let me begin these remarks by acknowledging with gratitude and hopefulness the foresight and cooperative spirit of those who have organized this conference and, of course, all of you who have chosen to come to what I hope will prove a landmark gathering in the continuing development of career education. Educational reform centering on the career education theme is impossible without meetings such as this. Career education is, I am convinced, a sound general idea. But now we must impress upon its broad and relatively featureless expanse the substance and character that will make it a workable scheme in terms of the millions of Americans for whom education as it is presently constituted simply is not working. Many members of the minority races obviously find themselves mired in this category of neglect.

I would offer at this point a second acknowledgment, my recognition that you have come to this conference in a constructive, hopeful mood, but that you nevertheless entertain some very basic suspicions about the whole career education idea, and wonder just what it will mean in practice for minority people. Let me first say that I don't blame you in

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the least for this attitude. You are not alone. While career education has in general been warmly received, there are some who look distrustfully upon it. I can particularly understand the well-founded doubt in the minority communities of America as to whether any Anglo, myself included, can understand the thinking of blacks, Spanish-speaking, Orientals, or Indians, particularly your feelings toward a majority that has been historically ruthless in suppressing your aspirations and crushing your hopes, advancing glowing but hollow promises. And so you approach career education warily, fearing that it might turn out to be, as the National Urban League suspects, simply a fancy way to train poor people for a cheap labor market, or to track selected learners away from college entrance.

It is my hope and expectation that this conference will allay and perhaps erase those fears. And yet how could you be other than suspicious? You know all too well that, as our late President Lyndon Johnson said,". . .to be black in a white society is not to stand on equal and level ground." Nor, I would add, to be brown or red, or to speak a language other than English. You recognize with pain and outrage that despite the undoubted achievements of the civil rights movement of the last 10 to 15 years, the ground on which we stand is <u>still</u> grossly unequal.

Unemployment among minorities 16 and older is 9.9 percent nationally, nearly twice the white unemployment rate of 5.4 percent. Joblessness for minority teenagers is 26 percent, while the white rate is half of that. You know that a minority worker will find himself out of work far more often than a white

worker, that he is far more likely to be a part-timer than his white counterpart, and that the jobs themselves, particularly among minority males, are much more likely to be lower-paying and less desirable in most other aspects.

These facts represent a clear legal injustice. They are to a large extent a matter for the courts to decide, and decisions that are helping to rectify the situation are being made every day. But inequality in occupational status and in earnings is also clearly an educational matter. I cannot dispute the fact that a minority person may well have less interesting, lower paying work simply because he or she is a minority. But there is a very good chance that he or she is also inadequately prepared in an educational sense to strive for, to get, and to hold a more responsible, better paying job. That is what career education means, and not just for minorities but for everyone.

The fact is that economic and occupational inequality in America is far from solely a matter of racial discrimination. Christopher Jencks, who has written a book on the subject of inequality, has this to say: "It seems quite shocking. . . that white workers earn 50 percent more than black workers. But we are even more disturbed by the fact that the best-paid fifth of all white workers earns 600 percent more than the worst-paid fifth. From this viewpoint, racial inequality looks almost insignificant."

What this says to me is that occupational inequality is spread across the population and that career education is needed for <u>every</u> American, whatever his or her color, native language,

age, or location. It is needed for adults who came of age in another time when there was no hope of rectifying their occupational unpreparedness. They now can have a renewed hope and belief in themselves. It is needed in particular for the 2.5 million young people who spill out of our high schools and colleges every year unskilled and unschooled, prepared only to disappear into our broadening, deepening pool of the unemployed, the under-employed, and the disillusioned. In a society such as ours which prizes and rewards skill and competence above all else, there is simply no need --- and no room --- for the unskilled and the incompetent, whatever color they happen to be.

I believe that a properly designed, well financed program of career education can turn this situation around. And I would like to take a moment now to offer you our conception of career education as an instructional strategy --- what we believe it could be, and how it could work to strengthen the ability of the schools to prepare our millions of children for useful lives and perhaps do a better job of justifying the huge amount of money we are spending on education in this country. Notice, please, my use of the subjunctive mood. I will describe what career education <u>might</u> be, not necessarily what it <u>will</u> be. Our intention is not in any sense to sell you on this particular vision. We are here to provide you with all the detailed information we have and to get your reactions to our presentations. But I want to stress that we are fully prepared to alter that design --- to revise it, to restructure it, to redirect it --- in any way that will enhance its probability of success. It has become abundantly clear in the past seven years that Washington has no magic

insofar as education ideas are concerned. If we are off target in any part of this, let us know. I am persuaded that career education will change again and again, perhaps never assuming a permanent form, as it continues to respond to a changing society. The final definitions will be constructed not in Washington, but in the States and communities and by the practitioners themselves.

To begin with, then, we conceive of career education as starting in kindergarten or first grade. Until the sixth grade, there would be no attempt to train students. All we are aiming at in these early years is developing an awareness of careers, a personal realization that each student will spend most of his or her life doing or being something --- and that "something" will be largely determined by work. Work may or may not carry economic motivations for all young people --- but it is seen as the essence of a useful life. Also, we want to give the young a sense of the remarkable number of options that will be open to them, to inform them of the manifold ways by which adults in this society go about the business of living productively.

The latest Department of Labor Dictionary of Occupational Titles lists about 23,000 different occupations. Obviously we cannot hope to teach youngsters much about so great a number. However, we can group the great majority of those titles into clusters of related occupations. A hospital orderly, a medical technician, a nurse, and a brain surgeon, for example, are all related, so we refer to these as being in the "health cluster."

We have identified 15 such clusters. The others are agri-business and natural resources; business and office; communica-

tion and media; consumer and homemaking; construction; environment; fine arts and humanities; hospitality and recreation; manufacturing; marine science; marketing and distribution; personal services; public service, and transportation. It's worth noting that the "fine arts and humanities" cluster includes poet, novelist, and painter. We are not trying to turn everybody into a machinist.

Clusters reduce the 23,000 occupational possibilities to a manageable number so that we can develop curricular materials around them. Inasmuch as most of the curricular effort at this point is being directed at the secondary level, however, most of the classroom activity for elementary-secondary career education must come from the initiative and imagination of individual teachers --- and some interesting things have been happening all around the country under our model development system.

A fourth-grade teacher in one Michigan community, for example, invited an industrial physicist from a nearby Pontiac facility to talk to her youngsters. His talk related conveniently to some of the concepts the class had been discussing in science. But in language arts, the youngsters had been discussing interviewing techniques, and after the physicist put his equipment away, he was grilled by the class: How long did he have to study for his job? Did he have to go to college? Was it important for a physicist to like science and math as a child? Did he get good grades in those subjects when he was in school? How much money did he make?

It was, in sum, a genuine interview, motivated by honest

curiosity. They were real questions, asked by youngsters who wanted to know something. During the year, 90 adults from different occupations --- the mayor, an electrician, an insurance salesman, a beautician --- visited that one school, opening for those youngsters a window on the world in a real way that no amount of lecturing or reading could have accomplished. In our present culture it is very difficult for a child to walk beside his father at the plow and learn about work. We are trying to find substitutes.

In seventh and eighth grade, youngsters move beyond this broad occupational awareness phase. By this time, they know something about all the clusters, and have begun to relate them to their own interests. They have learned quite a bit, too, about their own aptitudes --- which subjects they're good in, which ones they're so-so in, which ones they find the most fun.

They know enough about themselves and about careers, in short, to make a reasonably solid judgement about which of the 15 clusters appeal to them most, and to choose a few --- we think three is a good number --- for more systematic exploration. And in ninth grade, after two years of this narrowing exploration, they will know enough about the three occupational clusters they've been studying to make a tentative selection of one as their field for further and more concentrated career preparation. It is important to underscore tentative, since career education calls for open options at all levels of learning. At no time should a learner of any age be locked in with a career decision, except of his own making.

It is at this point --- at about age 13 or 14 --- that

something undeniably and unblushingly recognizable as job-training begins. Our goal is that during the last four years of schooling --- the ninth through twelfth grades --- every youngster will develop entry-level job skills that will qualify him for employment upon leaving school, whenever he leaves.

I repeat, every youngster --- including those who intend to go on to college or some other form of postsecondary education. I mean the sons and daughters of bankers and brokers as well as the sons and daughters of boiler makers and bellmen. If, by tenth grade, a girl has decided that she wants to take a Ph.D. in molecular biology, fine; not only are we for her, but we stand in awe of her knowledge of what the words mean. Recognizing the uncertain nature of life and the changeability of young minds and spirits, however, we want to give her a fallback position if her plans don't work out --- to make sure that she can qualify for a good job even if she leaves high school before graduation. Moreover, even if that job won't be at the level to which she originally aspired, at least she will have adequate skills in an occupational area that interests her --- in this case, the health cluster, perhaps as a licensed practical nurse or laboratory technician. Finally, if her circumstances do improve, she retains the option and the qualification to return to her goal through higher academic training --- at any time, perhaps years later.

This is a major point to be made about each of the occupational clusters: each includes a range of employment opportunities that can accommodate every type of aptitude, every level of intel-

lect, every scale of ambition. The construction cluster, for instance, has room for young men who prefer outdoor, manual work --- and, these days, for young women who prefer outdoor, manual work. This cluster also has room for entrepreneurs who aspire to operate their own contracting business someday. It has room for skilled craftsmen in the construction trades, for engineers concerned with the strength of materials, and for architects concerned with beauty and function. And it has room for new specialities emerging in economic and other social sciences, not the least being new fields such as environmental science, urban planning, and new-town management.

A few days ago I watched a interview on television with a Washington, D.C. high school student aged 17. His name is Adrain Dunbley. He works at basketball six hours a day and many professional scouts are interested in him. He said: "I have just decided that I intend to be a professional basketball player, and I am working at it. Some say that I am not very social. OK. You have to make sacrifices. I have made those sacrifices because I want to."

This is career education. A young man who knows what he wants to do, and who has taken hold of his own destiny. I know that somewhere a wise coach or teacher or counselor in the D.C. schools helped Adrian see his capacities and helped him decide to build a career.

In our thinking about occupations and careers, then, we have been careful to make room for the hands and the hammer and the honest skill it takes to drive a nail straight or the talent and

desire to play a violin. But we give equal voice to the imagination and the spirit, and the liberalizing function of all learning, including the undergirding of academic subjects at all levels. These are all parts of one whole, each with its own dignity and importance, and we make no apology for teaching the future architect what a carpenter does, or teaching the future carpenter the liberalizing joys of Robert Browning and Edna St. Vincent Millay. It is well past time for our educational institutions to help eliminate the phony snobbery and the pervasive prejudice related to the work that people do --- to overcome the idea, passed on to us by our own parents, that some jobs are worthy and some are not, that some family heads are to be respected and others scorned, and that the best way to tell the difference is to see whether the wage earner owns a college degree and wears a tie to work.

By twelfth grade, then, our plan is that career education will have prepared every youngster for an entry-level job in the occupational cluster of his choice. We remind ourselves that we will have about 22 percent of our young dropping out before high school graduation. If career education does not entice them to stay, at least we believe it will qualify them for something better than the streets.

Reducing all this to essentials, then, we can say that career education has just two goals: <u>first</u>, that every person shall leave secondary school able to get employment of interest, of importance, and --- most important --- with good potential for advancement in every sense; <u>second</u>, that those who choose

will be able to go on to some form of postsecondary education, whether a community or junior college, a two-year technical institute, a four-year institution, or professional graduate studies.

We really hope that career education will eliminate the word "dropout" from the language.

A student cannot be called a dropout if he or she leaves school at age 16 or 17 if the system is designed in such a way that the student may leave when he chooses and return when he chooses. He will leave because he's ready to leave and he's equipped to leave. He spins out of it, goes to work, spins back into it, is accepted readily, continues to higher education and always keeps his options open.

Career education isn't just getting a job. That's part of it, of course. But career education will, for the first time, give young people a sense of control over their own destiny, give them a chance to shape their own lives in systematic ways, give them a chance to say, "I'm in charge and I know what I want to do with my life," --- and give them sufficient solid information and experience to make it work.

There is much more to the career education design than I have spoken about today. John Ottina and Tom Glennan will outline for you the current state of our planning, model-building, and pilot testing activities in both the Office of Education and the National Institute of Education, the two agencies which share the husbandry of the Federal role. There also will be many opportunities today and tomorrow for you to explore our

work in detail, and to question its soundness and value as it serves all young people, including minority young people. Indeed, that is why we have come together.

As I mentioned at the beginning of these remarks, we expect that your observations and comments will help to broaden and, in a certain sense, to legitimatize career education, if you find that you can believe in the message. It was for this same reason that about a year ago we assembled a panel of critics, objective scholars and practitioners, and asked them to turn their specific talents and disciplines to a careful scrutiny of the proposition as it was emerging. They represented such fields as anthropology, law, political science, sociology, mathematics, vocational education, psychology, philosophy, business, labor, counseling, and other dimensions. A number of minority scholars and practitioners served on that panel.

The most tangible result of their exertions is a book that will be published and available, I am advised, some time in April. It will contain the reflections of our panelists on the career education notion --- what they think of the idea, how they feel it should work, and how it could impact upon not only their particular field, but upon the entire spectrum of educational, social, economic, and occupational concerns that increasingly occupy Americans today.

The essays offer a significant variety of opinion about career education. The authors probe, question, suggest, examine. And while the cumulative effect is certainly not one of Pollyanna-ish optimism, their words do convey a deep sense of

hope. They see in career education not only an idea whose time has come, but an idea that may well provide a central theme for all education --- both in and out of formal institutions --- for the foreseeable future.

I will close with a quote from one of the essays in that publication, that of Dr. Lawrence Davenport, educator, black leader, chairman of the President's National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. He writes:

> "The concept of career education holds greater promise for black students to attain a good education and preparation for interesting and constructive careers than any other development in recent years, including civil rights acts, Supreme Court decisions, and all other devices for improving education for blacks. . . career education is one approach which certainly deserves close scrutiny. . ."

I believe Dr. Davenport's sentiments apply not only to black students and those of the other minorities represented here today, but to all students. For all their sakes, then, I invite you to examine this ideal with all the critical insights you can bring to bear. We do not have many chances left to make education work for all our children. The road of the past 15 years is strewn with the burned-out hulks of vehicles that didn't make it, not because they weren't good vehicles, but because not

enough people believed in them and knew how to operate them. If we truly mean what we have been saying for over a hundred years about equal educational opportunity, we had better get on with it now. The concept we are putting before you today is the best vehicle I know of --- but it has to belong to all who care about education, not just the Washington types or the theorists.

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